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MEMORANDUM

Special Assessments on the Middle East Situation

EFFECT ON EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES
OF SOVIET ARMS RESUPPLY

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26 June 1967

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
26 June 1967

Effect on Egyptian and Syrian Military Capabilities
Of Soviet Arms Resupply

Summary

The quantities of Soviet arms already delivered are still far below the quantities lost by Egypt. The fact of their delivery has probably helped the USSR to retain its position in Egypt. For the near future these deliveries appear insufficient for the Egyptians to initiate military operations against Israel with any confidence.

The Soviets probably will substantially re-equip Egypt and Syria. A major Soviet consideration will be to retain political influence in Cairo and Damascus, particularly in the next several months, while measures to resolve the Middle Eastern situation are being worked out. The Soviets might offer a mix of equipment which would help Egypt more in defense than offense.

Resupply of a large part of Egyptian losses would take about six months. Complete resupply would take at least a year. Aircrew losses were small, and Egypt probably has sufficient pilots and ground crews for new aircraft to replace its recent losses. Its ground forces were shattered in the Sinai, both physically and in morale and leadership. Extensive regrouping and training is necessary before they will be ready for combat. It would require more than a year for the army to get up to the degree of effectiveness it had prior to 5 June 1967.

1. The USSR has moved rapidly to supply Egypt with fighter aircraft, tanks, and other equipment which replaces some lost materiel. This supplying has been done by an extraordinary airlift as well as by surface shipment to Egypt, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] We assess below the magnitude of Egyptian and Syrian materiel losses and examine the extent to which they have been met by the Russians. We also assess the effects of two likely alternative Soviet supply policies on Egyptian military capabilities, particularly the time required to reorganize the UAR forces.

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UAR Losses

2. The critical weapons in the context of Arab-Israeli warfare are fighter aircraft, bombers, and tanks. These are the weapons which Egypt lost heavily and which Nasir needs to restore his forces to anything like a prewar capability.

3. Prior to the outbreak of the war the Egyptian ground forces numbered some 217,000 men, including 35,000 in Yemen, organized into nine divisions and 28 independent brigades. Among the arms available to the ground units were approximately 1,000 tanks, including 350 T-34s, 400 T-54s, and 123 T-55s--all Soviet models. The Sinai fighting eliminated from the Egyptian order of battle two infantry divisions, one armored division, and two thirds of its independent brigades. It also severely damaged many other units and appears to have temporarily shattered the command and control structure. Personnel losses were heavy; losses among armored vehicle crews must have been high. Equipment losses include about 500 tanks, a few hundred self-propelled guns, and thousands of personnel carriers, trucks, and other vehicles. There was considerable damage to radar installations and SAM sites.

4. Probably at least as significant as materiel losses has been the damage to morale and to leadership. The Egyptian Army in Sinai got a rude shock from the speed with which it was defeated. Its soldiers will have little stomach to fight the Israelis soon. Its officer and noncom cadre is

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hurt, especially since Israel has kept officers and noncoms as prisoners of war and let the soldiers for the most part go free. The top command of the Egyptian Army has been changed. It will almost certainly take many months before Egypt can reconstitute its manpower into effective units.

5. Before hostilities, the Egyptian Air Force had some 430 available combat aircraft of

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total is more than 300, including most of the bomber aircraft. Since most aircraft were destroyed on the ground, casualties among Egyptian pilots and aviation ground staff probably were light.

Initial Resupply

6. At this point, somewhat more than half of Egyptian fighter aircraft losses probably have been replaced. We know that at least 70 MIG fighter aircraft have been delivered

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7. Information on resupply of ground forces equipment is limited, but quantities so far delivered are small as compared to losses.

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Future Resupply

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8. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] When it became apparent the Egyptians were being beaten, the Soviets appeared to waver or stall, possibly to gain time to size up the extent of the defeat and the consequent refurbishing job. As soon as a cease-fire was assured, the shipments by air and sea began.

9. More recently, Soviet President Podgorny and Soviet Army Chief of Staff Zakharov made trips to Cairo, where they could make personal damage assessments. A high Soviet defense official reportedly also went to Syria. From the belligerent sounds issuing out of Cairo and Damascus and Baghdad, it is easy to conclude that these states will press hard for Moscow to bring their military equipment inventory back to prewar standards--or better. The Soviets probably will substantially re-equip Egypt and Syria. Indeed, there are indications they have already made the decision to do so. Arms shipments are likely to be fairly rapid and probably intended to appear impressive in quantity. This would help the Arab states in facing Israeli demands during the coming months of devising measures to get the Middle Eastern situation resolved.

Alternative Prospects

10. Of the two broad Soviet courses of action discussed below, the second seems by far the most likely. The Soviets could decide to build an Egyptian force far larger, better equipped, and better trained than the prehostilities one. A decision to do so would probably not be taken at least until the UAR showed progress in absorbing resupplied equipment. The effects on Egyptian military strength of the two courses are examined below.

11. Alternative One: Replacement of a large part, but not all, of the Egyptian equipment losses. In

this alternative, the Soviets would (as they already have begun to do) quickly replace fighter aircraft, armored vehicles, and artillery to the extent that the Egyptians could quickly absorb them into reformed units. The USSR would hope to retain substantial influence in Cairo, while not enabling Egypt to resume hostilities.

12. The effect of this course--which could be accomplished in about six months--would be to limit the Egyptians to equipped air and armored units less in number than they had prior to the war. The Egyptians could only view a lesser force as a temporary defensive expedient, and as insufficient for resuming hostilities.

13. Alternative Two: Replacement in kind (i.e., the same types of weapons) of all lost equipment, perhaps even adding some new items. In this instance the Soviets would probably have estimated that the risk of the UAR renewing hostilities--particularly of a pre-emptive air strike--would be greater than in Alternative One, but that this risk would be offset by enhanced Soviet prestige. The Soviets would probably have concluded that any lesser resupply would antagonize Nasir.

14. Such a rearming might eventually embolden the Egyptians to resume hostilities, especially if Nasir felt he could get control of the air. He might also believe that he must resume the fight to maintain his leadership of Egypt. This alternative would require a longer period to execute--more ship loads and more reforming and retraining of units to regain, at best, a prewar posture. Such an effort--the shipping of equipment and the rejuvenating of units--would take at least a year before the Egyptians were at a state of combat fitness comparable to that before 5 June 1967. On balance, the recent demonstration of Israeli military superiority would probably inhibit the UAR from attacking Israel even in these circumstances.

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15. Whether the Soviets choose to follow a course of modest resupply (Alternative One) or a complete refurbishing (Alternative Two), Egypt is unlikely to make rapid progress toward more effective military forces.

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[REDACTED]

The Soviets may try to enlarge their role in Cairo by pressing the Egyptians for Soviet participation at the staff level and at key places in the armed forces. The Soviets may push for a larger degree of training in Egypt than in the past, and this could mean a large military training mission.

16. Another factor is the mix of equipment the Soviets offer to Egypt. They might, for example, re-equip the Egyptians in such a way as to stress defensive capability while limiting their ability to take the offensive. For their part, the Egyptians are likely to press on the Soviets the argument that Egypt must be fully resupplied if it is to carry on the "anti-imperialist" struggle in the Arabian Peninsula.

Syria

17. Syria suffered heavily in the fighting, losing about 100 of its 425 tanks. The Syrian Air Force lost [REDACTED] fighter aircraft, [REDACTED] light bombers, and [REDACTED] helicopters. However heavy Syria's losses, its ability to renew hostilities depends more on morale and leadership than on material factors. The top command was badly factionalized prior to hostilities and is probably in even worse shape now.

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18. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Soviet re-supply of material to prehostilities levels could be accomplished in a few months.

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